

Preliminary library of alcohol health information and warning labels



Introduction



The European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare)¹ and Fuel² are proud to present this first draft library of alcohol health information and warning labels with a view to stepping up their introduction in the European market.

In this document, you will find a number of sample labels developed by FUEL in cooperation with Eurocare that can be used as a basis for a more elaborate library. It is our hope that this initial proposal will serve as a starting point for a much needed discussion.

These sample labels along with some others will be tested in the coming months within the framework of the EC funded Protect project. This is a work in progress. We would really value to get your comments and suggestions for improvement of both text and images over the coming months (Deadline for comments 1 December 2009).

In the long term it is our hope that a library of alcohol health information and warning labels will be prepared at EU level and that this will be made available to all EU Member States and alcohol producers willing to introduce health and safety warnings.

Eurocare has in addition prepared a report on alcohol safety and warning labels. The report, "Labelling initiatives" (August 2009), gives an overview of the different initiatives taken in this area around the world and the different messages used, and summarizes as well the main research findings on effectiveness of warning labels. This report is by no means a comprehensive academic overview; however it aims at being an accessible introduction to the subject and at encouraging a more in-depth debate.

Rationale

Eurocare believes there is a public health interest in informing consumers, by means of labels, of the dangers and health risks associated to the consumption of alcohol. These messages could be a symbolic statement concerning the nature of the product, a low cost reminder that alcohol is a special and hazardous product.

Although labelling is a means to deliver a clear message to the consumer, as a standalone measure, and in the absence of a wide range of other strategies to engage Europeans in safer alcohol use, it is unlikely that warning labels will, on their own, result in an overall reduction in hazardous alcohol consumption or specific risk behaviours such as drinking and driving.

Eurocare believes labelling should be part of an integrated public health strategy to provide information and educate consumers about alcohol and that it should be introduced as part of a comprehensive suite of measures to prevent and reduce the harm done by alcohol.

¹ Eurocare (The European Alcohol Policy Alliance) is a network of 52 public health organizations in 21 European countries. It advocates the prevention and reduction of alcohol-related harm in Europe through effective and evidence based alcohol policy. www.eurocare.org

² Fuel is a full-service graphic and communication agency, specialized in institutional communication. www.fueldesign.be

The Eurobarometer on Attitudes towards Alcohol (2007), showed there is a wide public support for health information and warning labels. According to this report, three quarters of the European Union population (77%) would agree with putting warnings on alcohol labels and adverts to warn pregnant women and drivers of the dangers of drinking alcohol.

Some Member States, like France, the UK, Spain, Ireland, Germany or Finland have now introduced or are in the process of discussing the feasibility of the use of health warning labels on alcoholic beverages containers, notably in relation to the dangers of drinking during pregnancy.

The European Parliament is now debating a proposal from the European Commission on the provision of food information to consumers (including alcoholic beverages).

Despite their potential for harm to health, the Commission proposal exempts beer, wine and spirits from the obligation to list the ingredients and to provide for a nutrition declaration that applies to all the others foodstuff and does not contain an obligation to mention any health warning messages.

Eurocare believes this is a missed opportunity for a more comprehensive approach to the reduction of alcohol related harm in Europe and it is in contradiction to what is stipulated in the EU Alcohol Strategy³ *“Citizens have the right to obtain relevant information on the health impact and in particular on the risks and consequences related to harmful and hazardous consumption of alcohol, and to obtain more detailed information on added ingredients that may be harmful to the health of certain groups of consumers”*.

Eurocare believes all alcoholic beverages should be required to state on their labels: their ingredients, any substances with allergenic effect, relevant nutrition information (e.g. energy value), and alcoholic strength, as well as include a health / safety warning. Such information would in our opinion enable consumers to make informed choices about their alcohol consumption.

Aims

Eurocare’s aim is to persuade the European Commission to develop such a library and adopt a framework regulation for its use. Eurocare believes the EC has a pivotal role in moving this issue forward. Today Member States representatives are waiting for initiatives at EU level and the EC is waiting for more initiatives at MS level. There is a need for examples on how these messages can be conveyed in order to be useful for the consumer.

The document we are presenting is by no means finalised, there will be a need to further develop these written and pictorial messages before they can become a library of alcohol labels samples.

1 Point 5.4.1, COM (2006) 625 Communication from the Commission An EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm

Health warnings on alcoholic beverages should:

Have a standard format and design, irrespective of the brand of the alcohol beverage, so that they do not become a part of the specific beverage design, this will ensure better visibility of such warnings

Be placed in a standard location on the container

Be parallel to the base of the container, be in a box

Appear on a contrasting background (black on white)

Size should be determined by a minimum percentage of the size of the container

Be rotating and with sufficient vividness and strength to attract consumers' attention

Be determined by the European Institutions/ Agency or Ministers of Health (public body not private agency)

Be non promotional- there should be a clear distinction between product information and the marketing of the product

Use images that are informational in style and taken from other ongoing education campaigns, this would enhance their effectiveness

Be understandable (should be in the official language of the country in which the product is sold)

Be separate from other information of the label

1. Pregnancy



**ALCOHOL MAY HARM
YOUR UNBORN CHILD**

2. Driving

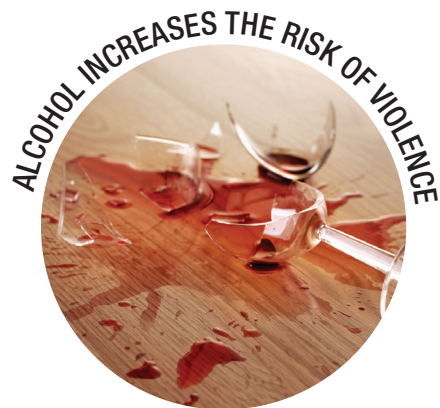


**1 IN 4 OF ALL ROAD DEATHS
INVOLVE ALCOHOL**

3. Harm to others



ALCOHOL INCREASES THE
RISK OF VIOLENCE



**1 in 6 CHILDREN LIVE IN
FAMILIES WITH ALCOHOL
PROBLEMS**

4. Operating machinery



DRINK AND WORK
DON'T MIX

5. Young people



**1 IN 4 DEATHS
AMONG YOUNG MEN
INVOLVES ALCOHOL**

6. Sexual health



ALCOHOL REDUCES FERTILITY



**ALCOHOL REDUCES MALE
AND FEMALE FERTILITY**

7. General population/ dependence



ALCOHOL CAN CAUSE
DEPENDENCE



LESS IS BETTER

8. Physical health



ALCOHOL CONTRIBUTES TO
MORE THAN 60 DISEASES



**ALCOHOL ACCOUNTS
FOR 195 000 DEATHS IN
THE EU YEARLY**

9. Mental health



**DON'T DRINK
WHEN DEPRESSED**



**ALCOHOL MAY CAUSE
MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS**

10. Medicine



**AVOID MIXING ALCOHOL
AND MEDICATION**

WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO RECEIVING YOUR INPUT
AND COMMENTS.

PLEASE SEND US YOUR SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT
ON TEXTS AND IMAGES BY 1 DECEMBER 2009 BY EMAIL TO
info@eurocare.org

With the support of:

